

faintly absurd imitation of all that he loved and admired. Some duke was quoted to me as having grumbled about "that little boulder Waugh, always dancing round one and pretending to be one's equal." Five minutes after hearing the story I had forgotten the duke's name, just as probably few will remember which other duke it was

who sneered his "scribble, scribble, scribble, eh, Mr. Gibbon?" And show your hand anyone who can name the aristocrat who thrashed Voltaire. Yet one feels that Waugh would have given up talent, fame and wealth to be some such exalted nonentity; and the fact that it was not to be done may have been the grit that produced the pearl.

## Still at It

by Alexander M. Bickel

This little volume is not, as it calls itself, so much a positive appraisal of the Warren Report as a devastatingly negative appraisal of most of its critics. Mr. Sparrow is Warden of All Souls College in Oxford. He was trained as a lawyer, and the mindlessness of such writers on the Kennedy assassination as Mark Lane, Léo Sauvage, Joachim Joesten (whose work is better known —

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A Positive Appraisal of the  
Warren Report*  
by John Sparrow  
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if that is the word — in Europe than here), Harold Weisberg, and Richard Popkin has set his teeth on edge. He is also astounded, as well he might be, by such a leaping non sequitur as Andrew Kopkind, writing in the *New Statesman*, has permitted himself. "If the Warren Commissioners are exposed as merely hapless dupes," says Mr. Kopkind, "other doubts about American history during the last two decades become more pertinent. Was the Rosenberg case also a fraud? . . . Was the whole US position on the origins of the Cold War fraudulent?"

The arguments of the critics whom Mr. Sparrow classifies as demonologists do not withstand analysis, as this lucid and concise essay, first published in the *Times Literary Supplement*, shows. Others before Mr. Sparrow have demonstrated this, though not with as much elegance, and yet these critics continue to find an audience. Perhaps they would not, or would not so readily, if the Report of the Warren Commission itself withstood analysis a

little better than it does, and if we weren't now inescapably aware that the Commission's investigation was more hurried than relentless, more question-begging than exhaustive. There is no indication that Mr. Sparrow would necessarily disagree with such an assertion, but he forbears from making it, and is content, "while accepting the *bona fides* of the Commission," to allow for the possibility "that something must have slipped through the meshes of their investigation . . ." and that Oswald might have had a single accomplice. That is being a bit easy on a Commission which was unable to reach unanimous agreement on the hypothesis central to its explanation of the event it was investigating — the theory that one of Oswald's shots hit both President Kennedy and Governor Connally — and papered over this gaping crack by pretending that it was "not necessary to any essential findings of the Commission to determine just which shot hit Governor Connally. . . ." Certainly, as Mr. Sparrow briefly suggests, there are alternative hypotheses consistent with Oswald's guilt, and even with his being the lone assassin, but they present difficulties of their own, and the Commission never pursued them.

Mr. Sparrow, who it should be repeated, is not merely elegant and concise, but almost always disinterested, perceptive and fair, naturally treats Edward Jay Epstein's book *Inquest* as a very different article from the works of Mark Lane and the rest. But he gives more weight than is justly due to a prissy critique of Mr. Epstein's book by Professor Arthur L. Goodhart of Oxford, which appeared about a

year ago in the *English Law Quarterly Review*. Mr. Epstein, who inquired into the Warren Commission's working methods as well as into the results it announced, interviewed a number of the Commissioners and members of their staff. Mr. Goodhart checked with some of the same people in an effort to discredit Epstein. He got from them some denials and some charges of misrepresentation, none of which, however, with a single exception, affect Epstein's findings, or throw any real doubt on his credibility as a reporter.

Nothing, after all, is more common than people recoiling from what they said in informal interviews when they see it in print, and particularly when they see the inferences that have been drawn from their statements. Most of the denials Mr. Goodhart obtained amount to expressions of dismay at the conclusions Mr. Epstein drew. But those conclusions are not refuted by reference to contrary opinions still held by people who supplied Mr. Epstein with some of his basic facts. Mr. Goodhart did catch Mr. Epstein at quoting J. Lee Rankin, the Commission's General Counsel, out of context, and drawing an unwarranted conclusion from the statement. But the statement is not a factual one, nor is Mr. Epstein's conclusion a factual inference; it is more in the nature of a surmise about motives and attitudes. And so one regrets that Mr. Sparrow takes the Goodhart criticism at full face value; it is the only weak spot in his terse, intelligent critique.

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